

Application No. 10/524,351  
Amendment Dated February 2, 2006

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Original) Method for detecting the attention level of a vehicle operator, wherein a steering performance of the vehicle operator is monitored, **characterized in** that a phase relationship between a change of a steering angle ( $\beta$ ) of at least one steerable wheel (22) of the vehicle and a change of the steering wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ) is evaluated.
2. (Original) Method according to claim 1, **characterized in** that the phase relationship is evaluated during time intervals when steering motions of the vehicle are not caused by an intentional steering action of the vehicle operator.
3. (Previously Amended) Method according to claim 1, **characterized in** that the phase relationship is evaluated within a time interval ( $t_2$  to  $t_3$ ) where the change of the steering wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ) follows a change of the steering angle ( $\beta$ ).
4. (Previously Amended) Method according to claim 1, **characterized in** that the length of the time interval ( $t_2$  to  $t_3$ ) is evaluated.

Application No. 10/524,351  
Amendment Dated February 2, 2006

5. (Currently Amended) Method according to claim 1, **characterized in** that a slope of the steering wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ) during the time interval ( $t_2$  to  $t_3$ ) is evaluated.
6. (Currently Amended) Method according to claim 1, **characterized in** that the slope of the steering wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ) is compared to a slope of the steering angle ( $\beta$ ).
7. (Previously Amended) Method according to claim 1, **characterized in** that the length of the time interval ( $t_2$  to  $t_3$ ) and/or the slope is compared with at least one predefinable limit value.
8. (Previously Amended) Method according to claim 1, **characterized in** that a frequency with which the at least one limit value is exceeded during a predefinable time interval is monitored.
9. (Previously Amended) Method according to claim 1, **characterized in** that at least one action is initiated when the at least one limit value is reached within a predefinable deviation, when the at least one limit value is exceeded and/or when the at least one limit value is exceeded with a frequency greater than a predefined frequency.
10. (Original) Method according to claim 9, **characterized in** that an automatic steering intervention occurs.

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

Application No. 10/524,351  
Amendment Dated February 2, 2006

11. (Original) Method according to claim 9, **characterized in** that at least one acoustic, optic and/or haptic message is generated.
12. (Previously Amended) Method according to claim 1, **characterized in** that stepped actions are initiated depending on a detected attention level.
13. (Previously Amended) Method according to claim 1, **characterized in** that for determining the steering angle ( $\beta$ ) and the steering wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ), an angular position and/or a rotation speed of the rotor of a servo motor (24) of the electric steering assist (36) and an angular position of a steering column are evaluated.
14. (Previously Amended) Method according to claim 1, **characterized in** that a steering torque of an electric steering assist (36) is evaluated for determining the phase difference.
15. (Original) Device (30) for detecting the attention level of a vehicle operator, with at least one sensor device detecting the steering performance of the vehicle and with a signal measurement and evaluation unit (32) capable of generating a signal (48) corresponding to the attention level, said signal depending on a phase relationship between a steering angle ( $\beta$ ) of at least one steerable wheel (22) of the vehicle and a steering wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ).